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ABSTRACT

Planning and the appropriate role of planners are vital elements for black community development in the South. In enhancing the community development activities of Southern black communities, planning would direct new challenges and cooperation between blacks and whites in the region. One of the challenges would be to influence directed social change such as the improvement of the quality of life for black and white citizens alike. In dealing with these challenges, white planners, being better able to identify with city government officials, business people and white citizens, could speak on behalf of blacks who may have difficulty in acquiring audiences with these elements. White planners may further act to involve greater numbers of blacks in the planning process. Black planners also have a role to play in working with Southern black communities. No matter what race or what role a planner plays, he or she must acquire competence through education. Specifically required by these planners are results that would enhance the economic and political positions of Southern black communities, and the generation of feasible beneficial choices for blacks. In return, Southern black communities are encouraged to exploit the planning process to focus greater emphasis on policy that makes for equity in resource allocation and use. (Author/EB)

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PLANNING IN URBAN SOUTHERN BLACK COMMUNITIES

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Patterns in American and social and political lifestyles are dynamic. These changing patterns make clear the increasing need to extend relationships between the unreached and hard to reach communities and professional technicians and scholars. With added emphasis there is ample reason for pledging involvement toward these groups. This discussion presents ideas related to one of these communities -- Southern black communities. Especially is planning a relevant consideration for professional involvement with the unreached and hard to reach. Presented are notions for appropriate roles of planners and the community within the context of Southern black communities.

Introduction

Within the planning profession only general agreement exists as to definition. Evolving in the last three-quarters of the century, planning continues to struggle to capture its uniqueness and legitimacy. According to Faludi planning is the application of scientific method -- however crude -- to policy making (Faludi, 1973). A more thorough definition of planning is a method of public decision-making which emphasizes explicit goal-choice and rational goals-means determination, so that decisions can be based on the goals people are seeking and on the most effective programs to achieve them (Gans, 1968). Both positions articulate the fundamental

features of planning as logical order and political or subjective based. Notwithstanding planning has demonstrated a functional value to the process of public decision-making.

Having no interest in regenerating the classic arguments of what accurately defines the South, let's set boundaries that can accommodate modification without significant damage to the ideas presented. For this discussion the South is that region below the historic Mason-Dixon Line and east of the Mississippi River (but including Louisiana). Because of growth trend and cultural similarities, some may wish to include Texas.

As focus is made on black communities within this geographical context, it is necessary to give meaning to the black community. The black community defies simple physical definition. Blackwell has described the black community as follows:

...A highly diversified aggregate of people whose social organization and internal unity are a collective response to the external social forces unleashed by white racism, oppression, and systematic repression in the United States (Blackwell, 1975).

Especially does this description fit the black experience in the South. For example the reference to white racism determining, in part, the Southern black community is notable. The definition demonstrates racism as more than

simple prejudice or attitude. It carries a component of implementation or institutional - reaction, the ability to effect programs, actions and systems that reflect a certain bias.

The perspective of this discussion is that of planning and planners in the context of black community in the South. That planning is related and has functional roles in this historically seldom reached, and often entirely unreached, population is presented. Ideally the presentation will generate discourse that will enhance the professional planning role among black consumers affected by policy and decision-making in the South. This is not to offer that communities outside the South would not benefit from the presentation and sequent discussions. In fact one may recognize more similarities than differences of the southern experience when compared with those outside the South.

Planning Issues

The status of Southern black communities will continue to be a gauge for the total progress experienced by the region. Black communities in the South, and elsewhere, lag their white counterparts in all indexes used for measuring the quality of life. That contention will be made without recourse to the numerous data available for support. The planning issue of the 1980's is the exploitation of

human and technical capacities to generate viable community development in Southern black communities. A proposal for black community development would involve planning as one of several salient phases (Harris, 1976). Community development in black communities in the South is complex for political and technical reasons. Political tradition and historical resistance will persist and tend to constrain attempts to improve the total community life among black Southerners. It is not the immediate responsibility of the planning process to reverse these traditions; it is the duty of planning to achieve community development goals within the social context. Later the appropriate roles planners might take in the Southern environment will be discussed. Technically the task of the planning process is to work toward community goal consensus, resource identification, alternative development, citizen involvement, and evaluation. Especially is the concern of alternative development important. Blacks in the South have historically had few options to exercise. The planning process is ideally suited to technically change that situation by producing alternatives that reflect the economic and political parameters that exist in society. Planning then becomes a vital element of the community development process in these more difficult to reach communities. In enhancing the community development activities of Southern black communities, planning would direct new challenges and cooperation between blacks and whites in the region.

It is not to be concluded that the planning process has had no influence on Southern black communities in the past. The reality is quite the contrary. Planning in the South, as elsewhere, has worked to influence the direction and quality of value frames of both individuals and institutions. In so doing planning imposes a bias or perspective in generating rationale, support and prescription for future actions, and programs. That black communities in the South have suffered adversely as a result of racially biased planning practices is without challenge. More importantly, however, for the present context is the degree to which the situation will reverse itself. On that point Victor Palmieri is not encouraging. In responding in an interview by Gerald Myloric to the question if a 'new will' to address the issues had been made, Palmieri responded, "We have not generated a 'new will' and the probability of our doing so is declining, both in terms of attitudes and in terms of institutional arrangements" (Myloric, 1975). This discussion holds for slightly more optimism.

If values determine much of the worth of planning to the often non-self determining Southern black community, they are reflected in disparities of services between black and white neighborhoods in the South. Frequently citing some lacking in the "state of the art" planning practice has excused many shortcomings. Decision makers employing

the planning process have been less than competent in the South. Two historians writing about Southern urban problems explained "because Southern cities had no large industries, except for those dominant few run by distant Yankees, their politics fell under the control of local business and mercantile elites. These were, on the whole, men of limited vision quick for the dollar indeed, and suckers for the most shallow dreams of progress, but also bound up in 'keeping the nigger in his place'" (Brownell and Goldfield, 1976). So there is a connection between planning and the Southern black community already. The link historically has been a matter of emphasis and quality. In the South it is the readily visible differences in quality of services between black and white communities that show the emphasis of past, and in many cases continuing, planning.

The challenge is to influence directed social change. The goal of this directed social change is the evolution of a New South.

Having made the agreement that planning is one functional element of community development, it is the latter that fundamentally aims for social change. Social change is reform and more. Social change is the reordering and restructuring of societal forces. These community elements are brought together through change establishing new power balances. Purposeful social change in the South is redistributive.

Influence and power, race and class, and sex and age give way as important determinants of personal worth.

These notions are idealistic. However, the stuff of which planning is made are dreams. Planning is the art and science of articulating dreams (ideas) in future contexts. Paying due respect to constraining realities, planning serves the purpose of projecting desired end states with the deliberation of schedules. A significant error in planning for Southern communities in the past has been the lack of honesty involving matters of race. In this region race is often a central variable in decision making and ought to be faced openly and above board. In so doing the ideas presented become more realistic. Of course, there is the danger of arousing negative public sentiment, both black and white, to certain proposals. That too is the nature of planning. The salient criterion for planning practice in Southern communities should be the improvement of the quality of life -- for black and white citizens alike.

Community development, relations between planning and the Southern black community, and social change are the key planning issues in this region.

Practicing Planner Roles

In the South the appropriate role of a planner in reality is often a function of race. White planners and black planners will have different expectations from various

clients -- especially Southern black communities. Blacks expect white planners to be change agents in what to the black community in the South is often a hostile environment. In this role the white planner may effectively operate as a communicator of ideas and desires (goals) that are expressed by the black community. As a communicator the white planner is able to better articulate the often unprofessionally expounded view of the poor, core city dweller. Being better able to identify with city government officials, business people, and white citizens, the white planner could speak on behalf of blacks who may have difficulty in acquiring audience with these elements.

White planners may further act to involve greater numbers of blacks in the planning process. Without debating the issues about advocacy planning, it suffices to make clear that white planners have obligations to Southern black communities. These obligations have as a capstone the bringing of action to insure black community participation in decision making. Since the argument is that blacks in the South have been denied this opportunity in the past, and it continues, white planners have no real alternatives to advocacy planning -- unless they persist in planned exclusion of blacks in the South. White planners need to involve blacks in the design and implementation of community studies, especially those related to the black community. White planners need to

involve blacks in the analysis and interpretation of data collected about population or systems. White planners need "to help people (black) draw up their demands on a given part of the power structure" (Paul and Linda Davidoff, 1976).

Black planners too have a role to play in working with Southern black communities. Community organizer, liaison-spokesman, and advocacy are but some of the roles expected of the black planner. However, perhaps the most significant role for the black planner is that of training black community residents to become self-sufficient in the planning process. Ideally the black planner ought to be of the community and have strong black group interest. In fact all benefits realized by the black community are shared by the black planner. Black planners find their social position and status potential closely tied to those of the larger black community, especially in the South.

Without elaboration we can identify important elements that are characteristic of the desirable black planner who works with the black community.

1. Strong sense of commitment to the causes identified by poor blacks.
2. Strong belief in structural change as the method to ease social ills of the poor.
3. Strong support for meaningful participation in the decision-making process by blacks.

4. Distrust of existing social and political institutions that are oppressive of blacks.
5. Realization that advocacy planning is political.
6. Belief that advocacy planning is servant to the demands of the community.
7. Willingness to work as directed by the (black) community for small financial payment for services rendered.
8. Be free of the God or Saviour Complex.

No matter the role a planner played in relating with black communities in the South, he (and we respect the inclusion of women) must acquire competence through education and experience. This requirement applies equally to black and white planners. Competence is simply the ability to apply the current state of the art to achieve "correct" answers. It is the condition of being both good and effective in one's specialty.

Indeed planning education may require a "reshaping" as called by Chester Hartman several years ago. Planning facilities must be more reflective of multidisciplinary programs. Instruction increasingly should rely upon people with varied and different experiences, including that of the Southern black ghetto. Thomas Blair, however, points to an even greater need.

If blacks are to use their accidentally-gained segregated homelands situated in the core of our central cities, black politicians and industries are inadequate sources of influence and power, for both men and manufacturing plants are controlled, from a distance, by whites, what is needed are more black city managers, urban designers, researchers and, above all city planners. Black specialists are necessary "to meet the challenges of urban governance: 'Danger-Limiting' strategies to prevent structural changes considered dangerous, and 'advantage-maximizing' strategies to increase political and economic strength when change is inevitable" (Blair, 1977).

None of you can count more than a few black students enrolled in urban planning degree programs in most universities. This holds true at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

A reality is that racial discrimination continues to be the basis for exclusion of black planners in the South from practice in local governments and private consultant firms. Perhaps in no profession is experience a more relevant factor in determining quality of performance than planning. Affirmative action programs that generate token black planner hiring are grossly inadequate to meet the needs discussed here. The focus must be on problem resolution with a realization that black planners are necessary for positive returns in efforts to effectively deal with black communities in the South. There can be no question that it is the white decision-maker who must provide the leadership to effect this change.

The end objective of all planning activity is to influence the direction and quality of policy. Planners in

the Southern context ought to aim for liberating black communities in terms of opportunity of choice, community (economic-political) development, and black technical sufficiency. James Coleman posits the notion that freedom of social action is constrained as a consequence of skin color (Coleman, 1971). It is the business of planners and the art of planning to generate feasible choices. The reality of fact is that historically these choices have rarely been to the benefit of blacks in the South.

Specifically required is planning results that enhance the economic and political positions of Southern black communities. Token personnel acting in "Assistant" positions and underrepresented black political leaders cannot satisfy the need. Working against habit and personal or institutional bias, planners are called upon to exploit their technical competence to design schemes that will assure blacks in the South the edge necessary to catch up. A redistribution of traditionally held statuses and powers is evident to realize social equity (Hamilton, 1973).

Catching up is difficult enough. Nothing other than black technical sufficiency will guard against loss of black achievement if planners decide to take the challenge put forth. This means planners must educate and train in the planning process members of Southern black urban communities. It means both formally and informally the effort must be one to bring about in Southern blacks

a knowledge, self-reliance, and respect for decision-making through planning. Also planners must acquire appreciation for the ability of blacks to learn and be taught. Without challenge this aspect of the suggested role of planners and the planning process may prove to be the most difficult (Morris and Hess, 1975).

It is indeed apparent that a heavy burden of responsibility and change in tactics have been ordered for black and white planners in the planning process as it applies to the black community in a Southern setting. But this too is a shared system of responsibilities and tactics.

Southern Black Community Responsibility

To achieve greater effectiveness of influencing governmental decision-making, Southern black communities must exercise greater maturity and respect for the practical realities of politics. It's fruitless to argue if the Civil Rights Movement is dead. Whatever the state of health of the Movement, the central issue is certainly no longer where one sits on the bus. While the concern relates more directly to whether one can afford the fare, other essential factors surface. For example, question arises as to what constitutes quality of life for Southern black communities. That quality of life standard will assuredly be fixed by the political and economic realities of the environment.

In the South black citizens will grow to appreciate the value of maturity in decision making. At the minimum this requires taking those actions that make black input and interests indispensable to white policy makers. Demands must be made more often, with greater vigor, and with increased clarity. Yes, the black community in the South must become selfish, pushy and vigilant. Community Development Block grant funds, for example, ought to be pursued with greater regularity. More appeals need to be filed where white power structures abuse these earmarked funds. The same can be said for health, criminal justice, economic and business development, and public assistance. Each argument made has to be more than noise; each must consist of logic, grass roots support, quality articulation, and legal base support. Maturity is best reflected in the degree of community education or group awareness among black residents.

Southern black communities are encouraged to exploit the planning process to focus greater emphasis on policy that makes for equity in resource allocation and use. Here is meant the conscious effort to balance resources between black and whites in the environment in the South. The planning process can add consensus of goals, problem identification and analysis, resource location, project design and evaluation to the thinking

and habits of traditionally reactive black communities in the South. To say nothing of the logical order required in planning, blacks should use the system to obtain alternatives based upon feasibility as well as the discipline inherent in generating well conceived articulations. A real contribution possible for blacks to bring to planning (and planners) is a more humanistic element concerned with how man should relate to his fellow man (Nicholas, 1976). It is hoped that in this liberalizing of the planning process black communities in the South will be more free of the traditional oppressive decision makers and one-sided living standards.

Again, to continue, lacking much in the technical competence area, Southern black communities must cooperate with intensity with planners and the planning process by taking a leadership posture as opposed to a submissive slant of accepting the remains. Some planners have called for "Increasing the knowledge, competence, and learning capacities for urban citizens and urban communities so as to enhance their capacities for autonomous and responsive action" (CUIUA, 1976).

A commitment to change through planning fired with the vigor of the 1960's is required of black communities located in Southern cities. The acquiring

of technical competence must be high priority. Skilled performance in problem solution becomes paramount as a community-wide goal for Southern black dwellers. Important also is the fact that a high level of technical competence will reverse a traditionally held dependence upon individual leadership. Many community members will have expertise in a division of labor that enhances the value of each individual member. Indeed the degree to which the Southern black community in the South obtains technical competence may be a measure of that community's survival. It is hoped that the will to survive be adequate stimulus to spark Southern black communities to take on the challenge presented.

Final Thoughts

The nature of this discussion has been to set forth a direction and call for involvement of planners, residents of black communities in the South, and planning to better improve the quality of life of a significant population in the region. The challenges put forth reflect the inequity of position of power and status of the black population as compared with that of the whites in the South. At the base of the contentions are the arguments of racism, slow rates of social change, and modest black involvement in decision-making.

While the roles for black and white planners may vary somewhat, a great deal of cooperative effort is needed. Regardless of race each has a functional prescription that would enhance black community development. To commit to do the job ought to be centered about the idea of doing the job well. The quality of whatever effort extended by planners with the black community in the South is best judged through the planners' education and practical experience.

Southern black communities likewise have a role or responsibility. To appreciate the complexity and sophistication of modern politics is essential to these communities. In addition, Southern blacks are urged to push with vigor and humanism for social change. Necessary to be effective is for the black residents of Southern cities to acquire planning self-sufficiency through joint efforts with willing planners. The planning process may prove vital to effectively structure articulations in defense and support of black needs.

The greatest remaining test of planning as a vital tool for structuring (social) change, and of planners as humanistic, technical designers lies with those challenges put to resolving issues facing black communities in the South.

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